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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 YEREVAN 000914

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [KPAO](#) [AM](#) [TU](#) [IR](#)
SUBJECT: FM OSKANIAN DISCUSSES RADIO LIBERTY, NDI, IRAN,
AND TURKEY WITH NEW CDA

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Classified By: CDA R.V. Perina, reasons 1.4 (b,d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: In his initial call July 16, CDA renewed our concerns about forced stoppage of Radio Liberty (RL) broadcasts, but mentioned that the Prime Minister's reply had been somewhat encouraging on this. He highlighted ongoing Washington concerns about Armenia's relationship with Iran, in light of Iranian FM Moutakki's upcoming Yerevan visit July 20. Oskanian promised to bear our concerns in mind, to damp down public crowing about the bilateral relationship with Iran, and to provide a full readout after the fact. CDA reiterated our dissatisfaction with NDI's unregistered status in Armenia. CDA also spoke of the need for Armenia to reply to the Turkish government's overture on bilateral commissions. Oskanian denied that the onus is on Armenia to take the next step. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) RADIO LIBERTY/NDI: CDA raised our concerns about the threat to Radio Liberty's ability to broadcast in Armenia, noting that he had raised the matter with DFM Kirakossian and PM Sargsian, and that Sargsian's reply, in particular, had been somewhat encouraging. A senior RL representative would be coming to Yerevan, and we wanted to treat any problems as technical issues that could be resolved. Oskanian had seen meeting notes from CDA's meeting with Kirakossian, and was well aware of the issue. Oskanian said he understood how hard it would be to explain in Washington if Radio Liberty were driven off the air. Oskanian said he had "put my two bits in with the president" on Radio Liberty's behalf, and he hoped the problem would be solved. Oskanian foresaw harm to Armenia's international reputation if this were not corrected. CDA then pointed out our continuing dissatisfaction with NDI's unregistered status, and the need to get this fixed, so as not to be an issue in the run-up to early-2008 presidential elections. Oskanian made no substantive reply.

13. (C) IRAN: CDA noted that Iranian Foreign Minister Manucher Moutakki was scheduled to visit Yerevan July 20. He commented that there remains a great deal of U.S. sensitivity and concern on Iran, in light of Tehran's behavior. CDA noted our understanding that Armenia must have some level of relationship with its direct southern neighbor, but reaffirmed the importance of Armenia also delivering the international community's messages on Iran's obligations to comply with UNSCRs. He also hoped that Oskanian would keep its Iran relationship minimal, transparent, and brief us after Moutakki's visit. Oskanian promised a prompt and thorough briefing on Moutakki's visit. He said he fully understood our concerns, and would certainly bear them in mind in managing the visit. Oskanian said that Armenia had

shied away in the past from delivering tough, public messages to Iranian counterparts, given Armenia's tremendously difficult and dependent geographic reality. He said Armenia has certainly conveyed privately American concerns to Iranian leaders, and that the Iranians have always responded with nothing but categorical denials of malign nuclear intentions.

14. (C) TURKEY: CDA turned to the issue of Turkish relations, observing that Turkish leaders have the clear impression that the "ball is in Armenia's court" to reply to Turkey's latest letter offering commissions to study the issues. CDA urged Armenia to reply to that letter. Oskanian denied this reported Turkish perception, saying to hinge the entire relationship on one bit of correspondence was silly. Turkey knows what Armenia wants and needs out of the relationship, and does not need a letter from Yerevan to know how to advance the relationship.

15. (C) MORE TURKEY: Oskanian related his recent trip to Istanbul for the BSEC summit, which he said had been a useful opportunity. He had held a press conference and an off-the-record roundtable discussion with leading Turkish newspaper editors. Oskanian had been surprised that the Armenian position was so little known in Turkey. The editors were surprised to learn that Armenia does not demand Turkish acknowledgment of the Armenian "genocide" as a pre-condition to diplomatic relations, but in fact is ready to open relations immediately without pre-conditions. Oskanian said the editors had not realized that Armenia had responded to PM Erdogan's original overture. Thus, in Armenia's view, the ball was in Turkey's court to show itself serious about negotiations. If Turkey opened the border to Armenia, that would strengthen the GOAM's hand to intercede in Washington to slow down passage of a "genocide" resolution. DCM pointed out that by not responding to Turkey's latest letter, Armenia hands Ankara an easy weapon in the public relations battle. Turkey has no need to answer American or European criticisms for its failure to engage with Armenia, when it can simply

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say "we made an overture to Armenia, and they have never gotten back to us." (COMMENT: The unspoken but clear subtext of this exchange was Oskanian's knowledge that the GOT is anxious to derail passage of a "genocide" resolution in Congress, and thus needs to be seen as doing something to improve the relationship with Armenia. Neither Oskanian nor President Kocharian is going to go out of his way to make this easy for Turkey. END COMMENT)

16. (C) BACKGROUND NOTES: Oskanian received CDA as an old friend. CDA reiterated Washington's determination to place a permanent ambassador in Yerevan as soon as possible, but in the meantime, CDA was pleased with the chance to spend some time in Armenia. CDA commented that MCC was a tremendous opportunity for Armenia, and just one example of the strong fundamentals to the bilateral relationship. Oskanian agreed, but also reaffirmed the need to be vigilant on the qualifying indicators, so that Armenia does not lose its eligibility. Oskanian, eyeing the large number of observers in the room, promised to update CDA on the Minsk Group negotiations at their next meeting.

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